

MALU RIVERA-PEOPLES

WSPA DIRECTOR
BALLET PROGRAM DIRECTOR

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Malu Rivera-Peoples is an acclaimed dancer, master teacher, and visionary director whose career spans over four decades of international artistic leadership. As the Founder and Artistic Director of the Westlake School for the Performing Arts (WSPA) in California, she has shaped the institution into a premier pre-professional training ground. Her legacy of excellence was punctuated by WSPA earning its 15th Outstanding School Award at the prestigious Youth America Grand Prix (YAGP) regional semi-finals, alongside her receipt of a Lifetime Achievement Award for her exceptional contributions to the performing arts and cultural heritage.
Professional Dance & Early Career

A native of the Philippines, Rivera-Peoples began her elite training under the mentorship of legendary ballerina Felicitas "Tita" Radaic, while her artistic leadership was profoundly influenced by Philippine National Artist for Dance, Alice Reyes. This world-class foundation and her immense technical ability quickly propelled her into the professional ranks:

- Ballet Philippines: Joined as a teenager, rising to the rank of soloist and performing coveted principal roles in timeless classics including Swan Lake, Giselle, Don Quixote, Romeo & Juliet, and The Nutcracker.
- Pedagogical Foundations: Showcasing a rare early aptitude for teaching, she qualified as a member of the Royal Academy of Dance (RAD, London) at just 16 years old. By age 19, she successfully opened her first dance academy, the Silid-Sining Workshop for the Performing Arts, in Manila.

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Pedagogical Mastery & Leadership at WSPA

After migrating to the United States in 1983, Rivera-Peoples co-founded WSPA in Daly City in 1991, transforming it into a highly respected cultural anchor.

- Four-Tier Training Paradigm: Under her direction, WSPA implements a rigorous pre-professional ballet curriculum designed for dancers pursuing professional careers, while fostering inclusive, diverse community programs.
- Choreographic Distinction: She is a two-time recipient of the Outstanding Choreographer Award from YAGP (2004, 2006), and orchestrates WSPA's grand annual production of The Nutcracker at San Francisco's historic Palace of Fine Arts.
- Artists in Motion Bay Area: To eliminate barriers for aspiring artists, she helped establish this parent-led non-profit organization, funding travel and competition opportunities for young talent.

Major Honors & Global Recognition

Rivera-Peoples' lifelong dedication has earned her highly esteemed decorations within both the dance world and the global community:

- YAGP Outstanding School Awards: WSPA's historic 15th Outstanding School victory underscores her unbroken commitment to world-class technical standards, clean synchronization, and artistic integrity.
- Lifetime Achievement Award: Honored by the Asian Pacific American Heritage Celebration Committee (APAHCC) for her continuous work in promoting cultural heritage and generating career opportunities for Asian-Pacific American performers.
- Community & Cultural Influence: Named one of the "Top 100 Most Influential Filipina Women in the U.S." by the Filipina Women's Network and awarded the Pamana Arts Legacy Award by the Filipino-American Arts Exposition.

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Through her unwavering philosophy—that a lifetime of achievement is simply the sum of small, dedicated actions taken each day—Malu Rivera-Peoples continues to cultivate the next generation of professional dancers, choreographers, and creative leaders worldwide.